

# NO VISION?

'That's the problem with Christianity,' my friend told me. 'You have no vision for the state, for society as a whole.' He was a Muslim but had become a good friend. I remember where we were when we had this conversation. I had had others like it before but not with as good a friend as this man had become. He had been a guest in our home recently and as we were talking together he expressed how thankful he was that my wife and I were trying to raise our children to be 'holy', as he put it. We both commiserated about the moral state of late twentieth century Britain where we then lived. And then he said this, 'That's the problem with Christianity. You have no vision for the state, for society as a whole.'

Is he right? Does Christianity have a vision for the state or for society as a whole or is Christianity, as my friend implied, so heavenly minded that it is of no earthly good? This difference between Christianity and Islam has often been noted.

Marx and Freud thought that Christianity had a pacifying escapism. Later Communists had been more suspect of its revolutionary implications. Some rulers have condemned it as treasonous while others have found Christians to be useful dupes. In the name of Christ some people have withdrawn into lives of hermits or monasteries or Amish enclaves.

# JESUS ON THE SCENE

I want to take you to Mark chapter 12 verses 13–17. But because of the seriousness of the topic, I am going to be quoting from all over the Bible to try to help give us a biblical theology in this area. Mark 12 verses 13–17 says:

*<sup>13</sup> Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. <sup>14</sup> They came to him and said, ‘Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the poll-tax to Caesar or not? <sup>15</sup> Should we pay or shouldn’t we?’*

*But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. ‘Why are you trying to trap me?’ he asked. ‘Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.’ <sup>16</sup> They brought the coin, and he asked them, ‘Whose image is this? And whose inscription?’*

*‘Caesar’s,’ they replied.*

*<sup>17</sup> Then Jesus said to them, ‘Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.’*

*And they were amazed at him.*

We see, after a ministry around the countryside in Galilee and beyond, that Jesus has now gone south to the capital of Judea, Jerusalem. It is a national